

Background Materials June 24, 2024– Planning Board Meeting

Prepared by Anne Capra, Director of Planning and Conservation, 6/18/24

Cable Access Channel 15 –The Cable Studio has indicated that this meeting will be live streamed on Channel 15.

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Background Reports for all Planning Board meetings are posted online:

<https://www.southhadley.org/1274/Agenda-Background-Materials>

AGENDA ITEM #1 Open Comment Period

This 10-minute period is set aside for the public to offer comments on items not on the posted agenda, in accordance with the adopted policy, as amended 9/11/23, posted on the Town of South Hadley Planning and Conservation Department webpage here:

<https://www.southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/View/11705/Policy-on-Open-Comment-Period---As-Adopted-2023-09-11>

Action Needed: Allow members of the public to offer comments to the Board.

AGENDA ITEM #2 Minutes

Planning and Conservation Coordinator Colleen Canning will forward minutes separately.

Action Needed: Vote to approve the minutes.

AGENDA ITEM #3 Correspondence

Planning and Conservation Coordinator Colleen Canning will forward minutes separately.

Action Needed: No action needed.

AGENDA ITEM #4 Discussion of Flexible Development Bylaw and Associated Bylaws Amendments

Proposed bylaw amendments and 4/22/24 presentation online:

<https://www.southhadley.org/1318/ProposedDraft-Bylaws>

Attached is a summary review of the Board’s discussions to date and a proposed revision to the density model based on past meetings and feedback.

Action Needed: Review the proposed revisions and identify a final draft bylaw for the purpose of a public hearing in September on the 9th or 23rd.

AGENDA ITEM 5 Planning & Conservation Department Report on Planning Projects and Development Updates

A. Master Plan Joint Meeting – MPIC, Selectboard, Planning Board – August 6th

The joint meeting will occur as part of the Selectboard’s meeting on August 6th. The agenda and time will be posted at a later date. MPIC will be forwarding their Annual Report as well.

B. Next Planning Board Meetings and Other Important Dates

Planning Board typically meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month.

7/8/24	Illuminated Sign Approval, 300 Newton Street
7/22/24	Director on Leave 7/11-8/23
8/6/24	Master Plan - Joint Selectboard, PB, MPIC mtg
8/12/24	Director on Leave 7/11-8/23
8/26/24	
9/9/24	
9/23/24	
10/7/24	
10/28/24	
11/4/24	
11/13/24	Special Fall Town Meeting
11/25/24	
12/2/24	
12/9/24	
January – 1/13 & 1/27/25	February – 2/10 & 2/24/25
March – 3/10 & 3/24/25	April – 4/14 & 4/28/25

C. Leaping Well Nature Trail Accessible Seating Area Completed

It's been several years in the making and construction is finished! A new handicap accessible parking lot and trailhead seating area has been constructed at the Leaping Well Nature Trail on Mosier Street (next door to Mosier Elementary School). Funding provided through an FY24 State budget earmark. Great work by Conservation Administrator Rebekah Cornell as project manager. She will be working with the Volunteer Conservation Corps and Growing Wild Committee to plant native grasses and wildflowers around the new path, seating area and parking lot.

Trail maps for other conservation areas are available online here: [Trail Maps | South Hadley, MA - Official Website](#)

We have ordered a second printing of the hard copy town-wide parks and trail map brochure, and it will be available in Spanish!

AGENDA ITEM #6 Other New Business (topics which the Chair could not reasonably expect to be discussed/considered as of the date of this notice)
No additional business has been submitted to me as of the date of this notice.



Flexible Development Bylaw Review – June 7, 2024

Anne Capra, AICP, Director of Planning and Conservation

The Planning Board is currently evaluating the following components of the Flexible Development Bylaw for amendment. Below is a summary of this discussion and recommendations for consideration.

- Revised density and housing choice model that would allow for increased density above the base zoning and allow additional multifamily housing types
- Reducing the minimum acreage from the current requirement of 5 acres
- Mandatory affordable housing requirement (i.e. inclusionary housing) and/or density bonus incentive
- Small dwelling unit density bonus incentives
- Dimensional standards

New Density and Housing Choice Model

The table on the following page shows the discussed edits from the 5/20/24 meeting. Based on the Board’s discussion and the feedback from some members of the public at the last meeting, it seems the Tier 3 multiplier would create residential density that exceeds that which would be consistent with the character desired in South Hadley. Thus, I propose to revise the tiered approach by bumping the Tier 1 (which is the existing base zoning density allowance) to 1.5 and adding duplexes to the allowed housing type, changing the Tier 2 to 50% or more open space, and deleting the Tier 3 category completely.

Table 1 Recommended Changes

Tier	Open Space (% total site)	Housing Types Permitted	Density Standards*	
Tier 1	30% - 49% 50%	Detached Single Family Attached Single Family Two Family (Duplex)	<i>Existing Preset Method x 1.5</i>	
			<i>Zoning District</i>	<i># units/acre</i>
			Agricultural	0.75 x 1.5 = 1.125 0.90(WSPD) x 1.5 = 1.35
			Residence A-1	1.20 x 1.5 = 1.8
			Residence A-2	2.00 x 1.5 = 3.0
			Residence B	3.25 x 1.5 = 4.8
Tier 2	50%-65% >50%	Detached Single Family Attached Single Family Two Family (Duplex) Three Family (Triplex)	<i>Multiply # units/acre in existing Preset by 2</i>	
			<i>Zoning District</i>	<i># units/acre</i>
			Agricultural	0.75 x2 = 1.50 0.90(WSPD) x2 = 1.80
			Residence A-1	1.20 x2 = 2.4
			Residence A-2	2.00 x2 = 4.0
			Residence B	3.25 x2 = 6.5
Tier-3	>65%	Detached Single Family Attached Single Family Two Family (Duplex) Three Family (Triplex) Multifamily 4-8 units	<i>Multiply # units/acre in existing Preset by 3</i>	
			<i>Zoning District</i>	<i># units/acre</i>
			Agricultural	0.75 x3 = 2.25 0.90(WSPD) x3 = 2.7
			Residence A-1	1.20 x3 = 3.6
			Residence A-2	2.00 x3 = 6
			Residence B	3.25 x3 = 9.75

Table 2 Edits from the 5/20/2024 Meeting:

Tier	Open Space (% total site)	Housing Types Permitted	Density Standards*	
Tier 1	30% - 49%	Detached Single Family Attached Single Family	<i>Existing Preset Method</i>	
			<i>Zoning District</i>	<i># units/acre</i>
			Agricultural	0.75 or 0.90(WSPD)
			Residence A-1	1.20
			Residence A-2	2.00
			Residence B	3.25
Tier 2	50%-65%	Detached Single Family Attached Single Family Two Family (Duplex) Three Family (Triplex)	<i>Multiply # units/acre in existing Preset by 2</i>	
			<i>Zoning District</i>	<i># units/acre</i>
			Agricultural	0.75 x2 = 1.50
			Residence A-1	0.90(WSPD) x2 = 1.80
			Residence A-2	1.20 x2 = 2.4
			Residence A-2	2.00 x2 = 4.0
			Residence B	3.25 x2 = 6.5
Tier 3	>65%	Detached Single Family Attached Single Family Two Family (Duplex) Three Family (Triplex) Multifamily 4-8 units	<i>Multiply # units/acre in existing Preset by 3</i>	
			<i>Zoning District</i>	<i># units/acre</i>
			Agricultural	0.75 x3 = 2.25
			Residence A-1	0.90(WSPD) x3 = 2.7
			Residence A-1	1.20 x3 = 3.6
			Residence A-2	2.00 x3 = 6
			Residence B	3.25 x3 = 9.75

*Multiply the gross acreage of the subject site by the following maximum density standard for the subject parcel and round down to the nearest whole number. The resulting number shall be the allowable base number of units for the developed portion of the site.

Density Bonuses

- 1. Small Dwelling Units Density Bonus** – Dwelling units ~~<1,000~~ <600 square feet shall count as ~~0.5~~ **0.75** units. Includes detached, attached or part of multifamily building.
- 2. Affordable Housing Units** - Units qualifying as Affordable shall count as ~~0.5~~ **0.25** units. Includes units with deed restrictions on ownership or rental to income qualifying households.

Density Bonuses

In terms of *Density Bonuses*, for small units <600 square feet, I think 0.75 is too high and should remain at 0.5. Although smaller units do not guarantee a lower sale price or rental cost, they would be cheaper to build because of the reduced square footage and are highly desired in today’s housing market. If the goal is to transition away from large homes and residential footprints that gobble up open space and harm the environment through traditional lawns and landscaping practices (pesticides/herbicides, non-native plants, fertilizers), we should have regulations that incentive that transition. I would also recommend going to <800 square feet so that the dwelling could reasonably accommodate two bedrooms (i.e. a single parent and a child).

For Affordable Housing Units, a count of 0.25 increases the density significantly. For example, using the revised model proposed herein:

<p>Affordable Housing units count as <i>0.5 units</i> = 1 non-restricted unit = 2 deed restricted units Example: Allowed base density for project 3 units/acre = 6 units/acre deed restricted</p>	<p>Affordable Housing units count as <i>0.25 units</i> = 1 non-restricted unit = 4 deed restricted units Example: Allowed base density for project 3 units/acre = 12 units/acre restricted</p>
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Limits on Density Bonuses – I recommend possibly keeping a cap on density bonuses given the increased density allowed in the revised models proposed. 255-31 currently has a 50% density bonus cap:

I (4) Limits on bonuses. Density bonuses shall be cumulative and shall not cumulatively exceed 50% of the base number of dwelling units.

Using the 3 units/acre project base density allowance example above, rather than the full 6 units/acre, the project would only be allowed 4.5 units per acre (with a 0.5 unit density bonus).

Rounding Density Counts– The current practice is to round down to the nearest whole number on the final dwelling count for the site. The Board may consider rounding up, particularly if the bylaw does provide a density cap.

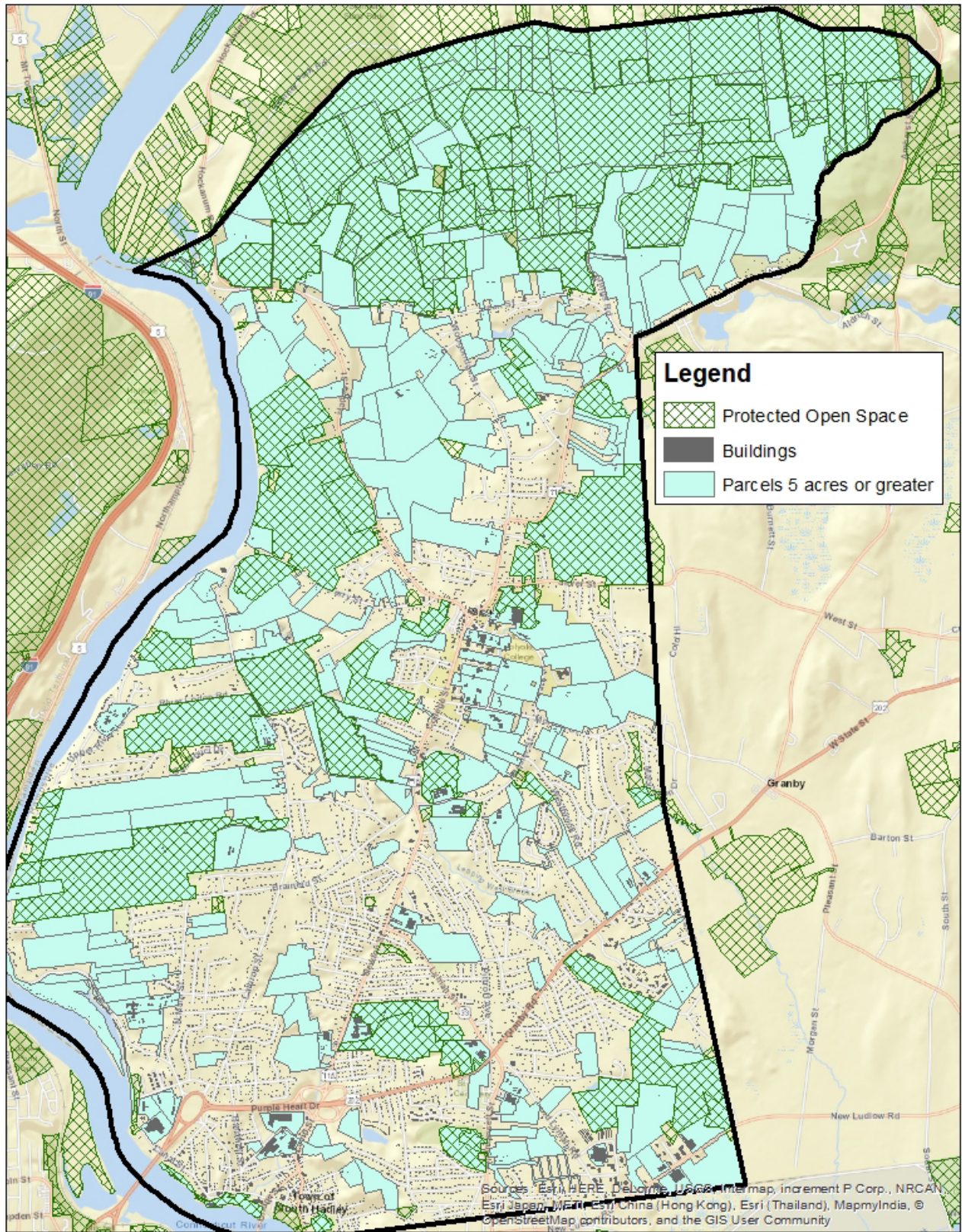
Minimum Acreage

255-31 currently sets a five acre minimum for a Flexible Development. Below are maps illustrating the parcels of three acre and five acre minimum size, and of those, what is already protected as open space to help visualize the general areas where Flexible Developments could be created in the future. Some of the parcels are already developed with buildings which further reduces the number of available parcels. Factors such as available road frontage, environmental constraints (wetlands, steep slopes) and zoning district are not evaluated. Although there is an addition of 129 parcels from reducing the threshold from 5 to 3 acres, some of these parcels appear to be either within Industrial Zones where Flexible Development is prohibited or already developed residential or commercial lots.

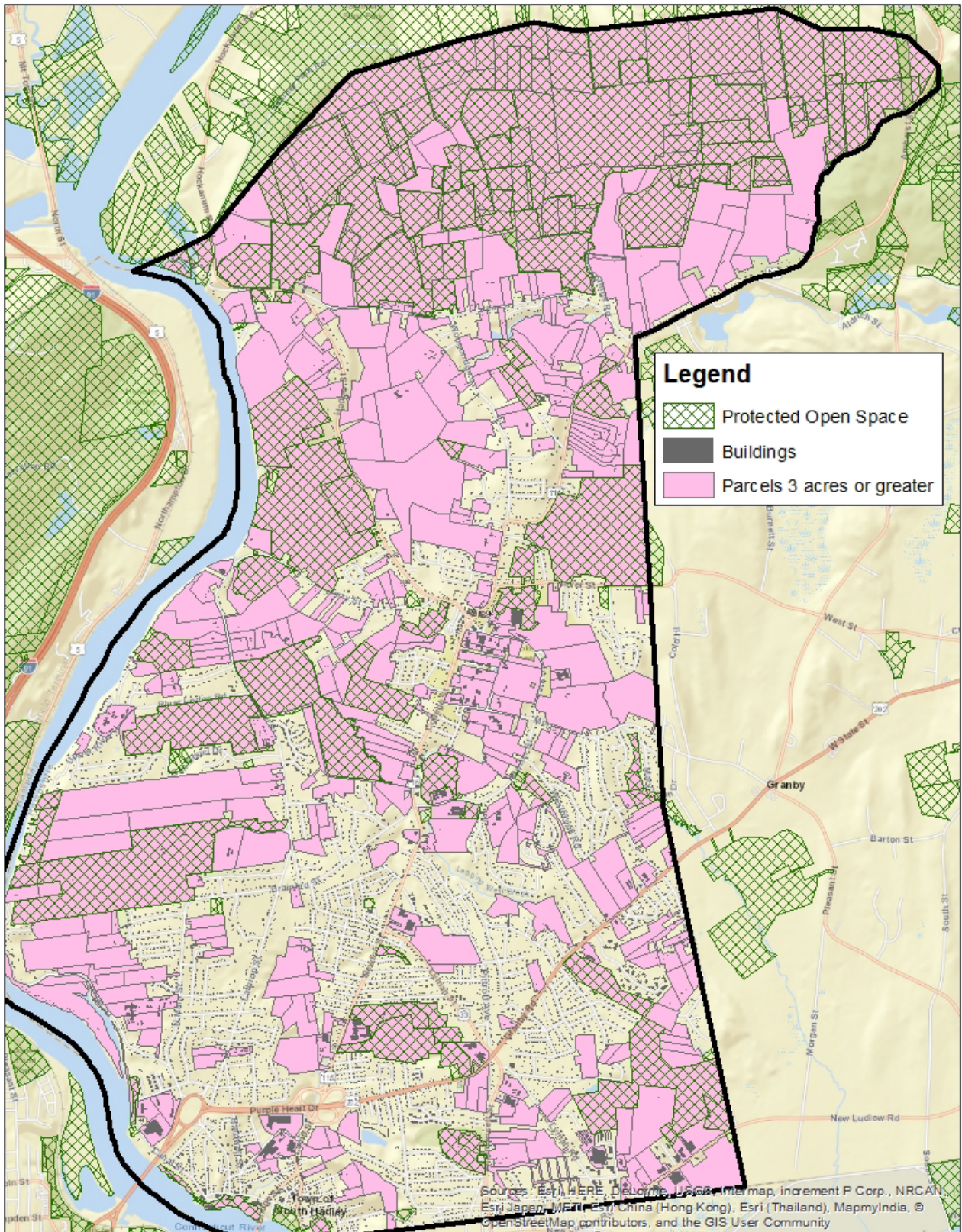
Threshold	# Parcels	# Potentially Available Parcels
5 acre parcels	325	Minus 128 protected = 197 parcels
3 acre parcels	454	Minus 128 protected = 326 parcels

Therefore, it is not obvious that reducing the threshold from 5 to 3 acres actually increases the number of parcels truly available for Flexible Development, it does suggest that it expands the opportunity for Flexible Developments throughout all parts of town residentially zoned.

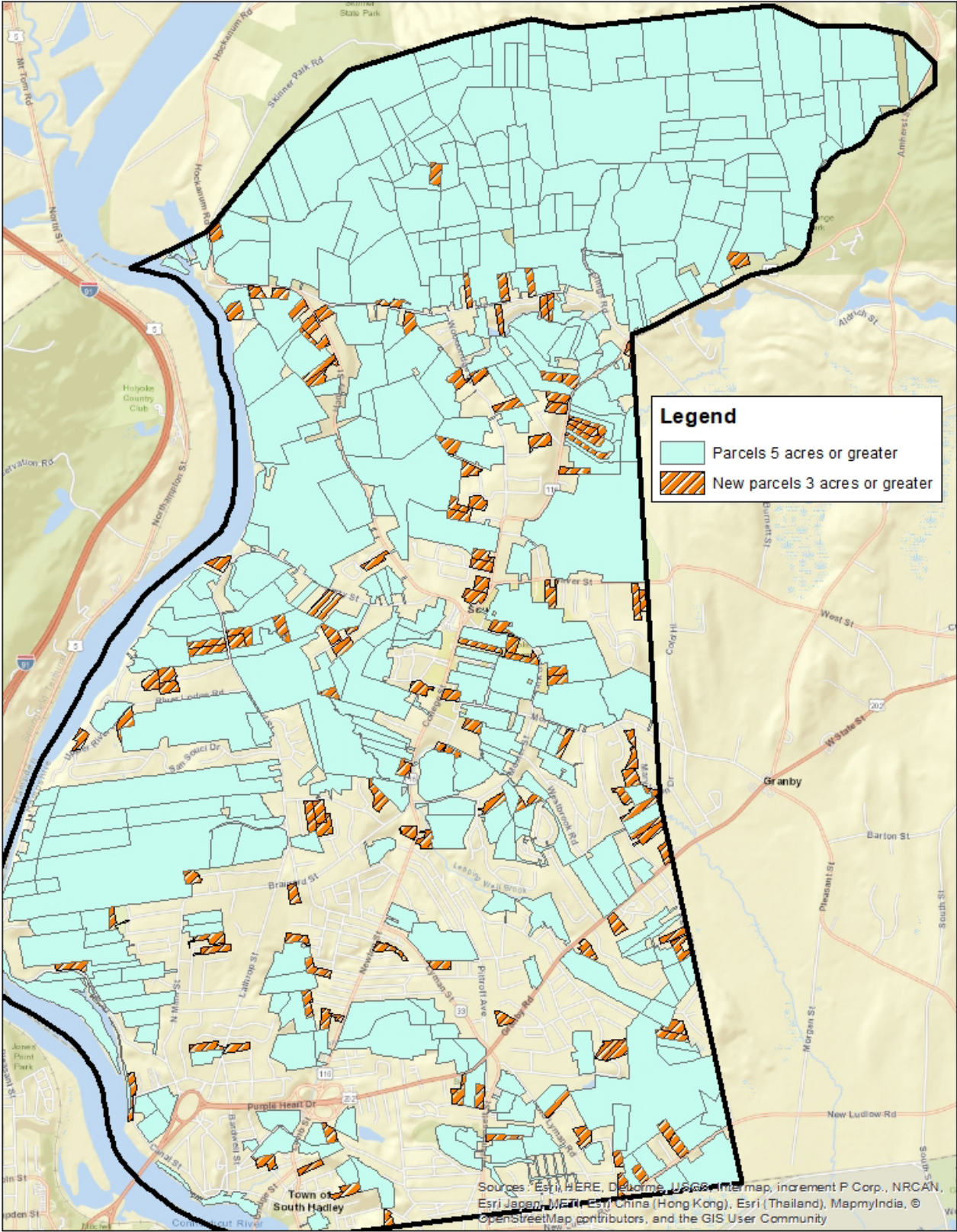
Parcels 5 Acres or More & Protected Open Space



Parcels 3 Acres or More & Protected Open Space



Comparison of Addition of 3 Acres or Greater Parcels



Dimensional Standards

255-31 currently allows the applicant to propose internal dimensional standards for the Flexible Development for approval by the Board. For lots with frontage on existing roadways, dimensional standards of the existing zoning apply. Buffer screening may substitute this requirement by waiver of the Board. Also, not all Flexible Developments have been Subdivisions. Some may be multiple dwellings on a single parcel. For this type of development, internal lot lines would not be applicable.

255-31 G. Dimensional standards.

(1) Minimum tract size. The minimum size of tract that may be considered for a flexible development is five acres.

(2) Internal dimensional standards. Lots and buildings without direct access to preexisting public roadways may be developed with dimensional requirements other than those of the underlying zoning district. Therefore, for lots and buildings within a flexible development without direct access to preexisting public roadways, the applicant shall propose dimensional standards including the minimum lot area, minimum lot frontage, maximum lot coverage, and minimum yard setback requirements to create building sites which differ from those specified for the underlying zoning district. These internal dimensional standards are subject to Planning Board approval. The applicant shall have the burden of demonstrating, to the Planning Board's satisfaction, that the proposed dimensional standards are appropriate for the site's natural and cultural attributes and in keeping with the purposes of this section of the Zoning Bylaw.

(3) Perimeter dimensional standards.

(a) For lots and buildings within a flexible development, but which abut lots or roadways adjoining the proposed development, the dimensional standards of the underlying zoning district as specified in § 255-21 of the Zoning Bylaw shall be applicable.

(b) Waiver. The Planning Board may permit a vegetated buffer and/or screening fence to be provided to sufficiently screen the proposed residences from the existing developments in lieu of compliance with the underlying zoning district's dimensional standards. Where such a buffer is permitted as provided in this waiver provision, the following conditions shall apply:

[1] The Planning Board may require the buffer area to extend around the perimeter of the subject tract.

[2] The Planning Board may require the buffer area to be equal to or greater than double the required rear yard setback of the underlying zoning district.

[3] Any required buffer area shall be left undisturbed and the applicant shall provide for its maintenance in perpetuity.

[4] If the existing vegetation is inadequate to provide a visual buffer, the Planning Board may require the applicant to add vegetation sufficient to provide a buffer.